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POEMS

BY THE

DAISY GUILD.

POEMS.

MYTHS OF THE DAWN.

POEMS

BY

ANNIE JOHNSON-BROWN

AND

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DAISY GUILD.

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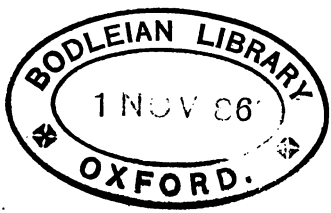
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THE DAISY.

All thy strength from weakness won,
Earthward when the storms may beat,
Back up-springing toward the sun,
Little pure-eyed Marguerite.

Lover of the earth and sky,
Making common pathways bright;
Toward the sun, a steadfast eye,
Unto men, a heart of light.

PREFACE.

THOSE who have read and admired MISS JOHNSON-BROWN'S Nature-Myths, as they appeared from time to time in the *Cheltenham Ladies' College Magazine*, have long wished them to be reprinted as a whole; hence the thought of publishing a volume of her poems.

Then it seemed well to add some others by members of our Daisy Guild—an association of old pupils; and we think many will be glad to have those of Mrs. OWEN, which came out in the earlier numbers of our Magazine, and are now out of print.

The writers are anxious that the profits should go to a work in which we are all interested. S. Hilda's was founded by a friend now dead, to train teachers for Girls' High Schools and Colleges. It was a small seed that she planted, but it has grown up slowly and silently during the last seven years, and has become a great tree.

DOROTHEA BEALE.

Cheltenham Ladies' College.

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MYTHS OF THE DAWN.

Science tells us Nature's story,

Saying "Such her life is—see;"

Says the Poet, "'Tis the story

Of our own Humanity;"

"Nay," the Seer cries, "it speaketh

Of the Life Divine to me."

MYTHS OF THE DAWN.

I.

φῶς.*

Before the birth of dawns, when æons lay
Asleep within the bosom of one day,
The realms of Being were alive with Light,
And none was there to see the wondrous sight;
The Heart of Light, alone, in silence glowed,
And from it, thro' all space, light silent flowed,

* Light.

Returning ever to its fount again,
Till joy's intensity grew fierce like pain.

Then Light's cool radiance kindled into fire,
And all the heart of it turned one desire,
Yearning the bounds of self to overflow,
And in another s life its being know,
And then began, at last, another day,
Beyond the Heart of Light a new heart lay,
Life riven from itself had there its home,
And thitherward would all Light's yearnings roam.
The glowing Life had gained another name,
That leapt between them ever like a flame,
For leaping all its being did up-lift,
And Life, the once-possessed, was Love, the gift.

Then space grew rosy in the peerless dawn,
In perfect Being harmony was born,
Communion in its fulness grew complete,
And loving was then life, and life was sweet.

II.

Αἰθήρ.*

They grew there into being, each a star;

And each one from its fellow dwelt afar,

Nor ever wondered that it lived alone,

Nor knew of any needs beyond its own:

Till, one day, round its loneliness there drew

A presence, as of Love, that thrilled it through

With yearning for another, felt afar,

And then star answered back again to star,

And all the whole wide heavens with music rang,

As star-life unto star-life softly sang;

* The stellar æther.

Then each one, glancing in the other's face,
Grew evermore in perfectness of grace,
And trembled as it felt the other's light,
And thrilling back its answer, grew more bright.

But no star ever yet has told to star
What was it brought them near, who were so far,
Who makes between their lives a living Way,
No star has ever dared His name to say.
When love is flashing from each other's eyes,
Their smiles grow solemn with a soft surmise,
As felt they what High-way the love-light came,
And knew that in their smiles is read His name.

III.

Σελήνη.*

The Sun-god chose an earth-child for his bride,
And drew her, in the evening, to his side,
And gave her all the sweetness of his light,
And kept her very close to him till night;
And then he left her, in high heaven to be
His perfect witness, wherein all should see
Light's utter sweetness, and not fear its fire,
And in the absence of her soul's desire,—
The darkness, where he is not—she shines still,
Her being's purpose to obey his will.

* The moon.

The softness of her smile fills all the night

With tender radiance and persuasive light.

Men say it is the shining of his face,—

That she beholds him in his distant place.

Her presence spoils the darkness of its prey,

No foulness near her purity can stay.

When suppliant earth-clouds reach her, big with fears,

Their burden falleth, as a mist of tears;

And little wandering vapours, lost in night,

She draws and gathers for her crown of light.

The whole earth lifts to her its great unrest,

And yearns to be uptaken to her breast.

Men whisper that the shadow of its pain

Has sometimes on her life like darkness lain;

Then bless her very softly, as they say,

He will not surely now be long away,

But come, and rest her faintness on his might,

And clasp her sweetness in his arms of light.

IV.

Ἥλιος.*

Not yet, he is too near for me to sing—

Too close enfolding me, my life, my king!

He holds me silent in his arms of light,

His face, that broods above me, blinds my sight;

His presence every longing satisfies,

And e'en its memory in the glory dies.

Not any know him, thro' his realms, as I,

The perfect answer is he to life's cry,

And mine is like no other's—all my own,

And all of him responsive mine alone;

* The sun.

And still there are, perchance, beyond me lying
Unfathomed silences, to wait the crying
Of needs that from their sleep must first awaken,
Ere thence the golden music can be shaken;
For, round me, is the glory of his grace,
But, over me, his unbeholden face.

V.

Γαῖα.[*]

Men call her mother, and their burdens lay
Heavily on her, and the children play
Upon her knees, and lie against her breast,
And tired and sad men draw to her for rest.
For, looking downward into her sad eyes,
Men see their sorrow there, and recognise
A meaning, as of some forgotten lore,
A glory in its face unseen before,
And suddenly grow quiet. All their sin
She meekly suffers, that her tears may win

[*] Earth.

A way to help them in their weariness ;

Thro' dews of pity, making passion less ;

And love's pure droppings, cleansing memories.

And unto him, whose all her beauty is,

She ever points them, that they see no more

Themselves, wherewith their weary hearts are sore :

And when, to their despairing, seems so far

His heart away from where their sorrows are,

Her tears are then the path his coming takes,

Thro' earth's compassion, all heaven's loving breaks.

VI.

Ἀήρ.*

With power for perfect love, he found but one,
And to her all his secrets told the Sun,
Till slowly grew, within her listening eyes,
The wonder and the might of sacrifice,
And from her, as she heard, self passed away,
And left her for love's utterance free that day.

Then far below the darkling earth, at last,
Felt break the bondage that had held her fast,
Felt fall the chains of darkness, one by one,
And in high heaven, above her, saw the Sun.

* Air.

But none of all her children ever guessed
Through whom he shone before their eyes confessed,
Who was it that had thus, for love of her,
Been willing to be his interpreter,
And, in her passionate desire to bless,
Been willing to be made than all things less.

For never has she yet by men been seen;
The earth has never felt her bosom lean
In yearnings o'er her, only felt her tears;
And not the frailest of the flowers fears
The contact of her lips, nor feels the kiss
Its wearied eyes at evening never miss.
And when her soul is burning with desire
To utter forth her love, all feel the fire,

And cry, It is himself! No eye hath seen,

And none e'er speak of her who dwells between.

His secret, in the glowing summer days,

She tells the dreaming earth, who murmurs praise,

Then closer folds around her arms of love,

And draws her blessings from the Sun above;

To men his glory she is showing still,

And praises, that are his, her being fill,

And she with him as one, to mortal eyes,

Is reigning through her own self-sacrifice.

VII.

Ὕδωρ.*

Upon her being's restlessness, the Sun
Looked ever, since her life had first begun :
And, gazing, his compassion oft-times drew
Her nearer to him, though she never knew.
Her passionate life seemed far from his calm skies,
Too burdened with the weight of self to rise ;
And in her being's sleeping depths was heard
Never a sound of any love that stirred,
Yet was its buoyant surface never still,
Tossed by the stormy gusts of fierce self-will.

* As water is of neither gender in Greek, the writer has felt free to choose either for the personification of the same.

And still the Sun was watching, and one day
Suddenly to her heart Love found a way.

And o'er her restlessness that hour she knew
The tender brooding of a peace that drew,
And then responsive she up-rose to rest,
From self delivered, on the Sun-god's breast.

The Earth meanwhile as ever was his care,
Though she had long forgotten what passed there;
The World to her was like a little haze
Upon the gold horizon of her days,
And ever she was seeking to forget
What sorrow meaneth,—but remembered yet.

Then knew the Sun-god she would have to go
Out from her Heaven, love's perfect life to know.
That eve, beside him, was a vacant place,
And one alone, awaiting far in space,
The call to her from Earth she must obey:
No lingering light about her told that day
In what a maze of bliss her life had lain,
Undreaming of the far-off face of pain.

Then o'er her being swept an icy air
That touched her like a pitiful mute prayer,
For then her heart knew there was somewhere still
A life than her's more desolate and chill.
And falling were her tears to earth at last,
As swiftly in her pity down she passed,

Losing her lonely self, so setting free
A love whose warmth might yet the World's life be.

And so she found Earth's needs a little space
Absorb her, and its heart her resting-place.

And then at end of many days, she came
Back to the sight of men, but not the same;
Earth's life, she never could again forget,
Seemed with her own life to be mingling yet.
And with the burden of her earthly care,
Her heart grew heavy in its great despair;
The currents of her being grew to rest,
To be forgotten, and at peace seemed best.

Upon the lonely heights of being lay
Her weary life inactive day by day;
And now no thirsty life would ever think
Of venturing to draw near to her's to drink,
And in a little while the very air
Seemed conscious that a self-bound life was there.

Only the Sun knew how a life could hold
Such hidden energy, yet seem so cold:
And lo, it was his love that slew at last
The self-love that had held her life so fast,
And, for the sake of others, now its show
Of whiteness she was willing to let go,
And even as herself seemed lost to sight,
Forth flowed her being with resistless might,

Of love's divine necessity to give,

Making with her life all around her live.

Then was the Sun contented; for he saw

A life obedient to Love's perfect law.

Itself for ever giving, so kept free

For life-tides from its source continually;

To thirsty lives of Earth a living stream,

And looking on it, oft, as in a dream,

Men of a sudden glory grew aware,

And fancied that they saw the Sun's face there.

VIII.

Πῦρ.*

In ages that are past, to Earth came One,
Whose face was as the shining of the sun,
And in the heart of him was strength to feel
The pain of all the world, with power to heal.

Then all the children of the Earth drew near,
And dwelt within his presence without fear,
And felt the spirit of their lives expand,
And knew a power they could not understand;
While each one to the lives surrounding threw
A joyous life-warmth, that together drew,

* Fire.

And in a common fellowship would bind
Of interchange of joy, all human kind.

Still were his arms of pity opened wide,
With pleadings of a love unsatisfied,
Till out of every life was crushed the pain,
Slow, joy-devouring, made his gifts in vain.
And Earth, their mother, trembled as she saw
The passion of his life her children draw,
As though was something in their lives that wist
In his of kinship, they could not resist.
His love was terrible, she knew, as Truth,
And all too pure and strong for any ruth ;
She longed in agony herself to fling
Between their lives and such a cruel thing ;

But nothing was in Earth, or Heaven above,
To quench the purpose of his perfect love.

Round some beloved life, before her eyes,
The circlings of his might would slowly rise,
Wrapping it safe from all who were so near,
And help of other lives it once held dear;
And then she knew that from his touch, in vain,
Would hide each place with power of feeling pain,
That, in his life's embrace would suffer still
All that had Death in it Life's touch could kill,
And nothing his dread love would satisfy,
But out of his beloved great Death should die.

And some there were with saddened faces came,
And seemed with solemn wistfulness to claim

An entry to the rest-place of his heart:
And these, within his keeping, walked apart
From all their pain, for he had come between,
Folding his presence round them like a screen
Of unconsuming flame they walked within,
As that to which their very lives were kin.
A part, they seemed to others, of that light,
That made the darkness of men's living bright,
That shed upon their path the gladdening ray,
Showing their wandering feet the homeward way.

And when, within his keeping, they at last
Into the secret of his life had past,
Of all forms seen the reasons, and had then
Themselves become as reasons unto men,

For ever out of Earth's bewildered sight,

Within the glow of his intenser light,

Their love, too great for all Earth's measures grown,

Still lived and worked for men in forms unknown.

IX.

Πνεῦμα.[*]

Like some superb dream-memory, lost between
Our sleeping and awaking, some unseen
Familiar Presence, ever since her birth,
Had haunted with its loveliness the Earth;
And during all the glory of the day,
This presence held her in its silent sway:
But after, when the evening shadows grew,
Amid the day's declining, oft she knew
A voice that like low music softly woke
A voice within her unto which it spoke,

[*] "Wind or Spirit."

Filling with harmonies the even-tide,
And Heaven, the while, was o'er her opening wide.

And sometimes, when the sun had made life strong,
And thro' it all strange energies would throng
Crying for outlet, round her she would know
Suddenly some up-lifting Presence throw
Its swift compulsion, and her strength release
In uttermost expression, that was peace,—
In strong unerring energy of will,
Wherein the turbulence of life was still,
And every power of her whole being, prest
Into obedient motion, was at rest,
And then her life would seem to rise that day
And sweep the doors of heaven, within its sway.

But, after, when no more was any sound,
Nor any token from the stillness round,
Then hushed, intent, her listening being lay
In uttermost surrender, day by day
Contented to be passive, lying still,
Within the motions of his perfect will;
Till slowly, in love's silence, rose, and grew,
And softly overspread, and thrilled it thro',
A trembling wistful awe, that was not fear,
A conscience of another, yet more near
Than unto her herself;—and she no more
Had any self-remembrance, as before,
Only the strength knew, round her weakness dwelt,
And, at her being's heart, him only felt.

*Ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καί ἐσμεν.**

My being's All, my Life! be less to me
Only one moment, that mine eyes may see.
Hold from me once one thought, withdraw thine heart
One little space, from all thou lov'st apart,
That so thine image may one moment grow
Distinct from all that thou hast made me know;
Only one moment, while I shew men why
A moment longer from thee I should die;
Only that they may know Love's purest light
Is evermore invisible to sight,
Know Love can only as supremest live
When nothing of itself is left to give.
Could'st thou, that men may know thee and confess,
For one short moment unto them be less.

* Acts 17—28.

Give to them less of Love—not quite Love's all,
That something may remain whereon to call,—
Ah, then, beseech thee! hearken not my cry,
Better should men, than thou should'st, thee deny,
Better for all thy gifts thee never bless,
Than thou should'st have to give one gift the less—
Than thou grow visible to mortal sight
By any darkness in thee—loss of light.

Be still to us invisible, unknown,
That nothing so be ever left alone,
Apart enough, to know thee from its being,
Apart enough, to see thee with its seeing.
Enfold us with the circlings of thy life,
Brood over us like heaven, above the strife,

The weariness of knowing, pain of seeing,

And all the clanging discords of our being;

An everlasting silence, which is rest,

An overshadowing Presence of the Best;

Night coolness, lying softly after strife,

Upon the wearied eyelids of our life;

No need to know or see, no need to speak,

Only the strong enfolding close the weak.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

SEA FOAM. *

I am free! I am free!
On the silvery sea,
On the breast of the billows upborne,
For my mother the air,
In her arms fresh and fair,
Held me up for the sun's kiss at morn;
And my earth-form of white,
From my storm-father night,
Was melted in colours away;

* Reprinted from the "Quiver," by permission.

So now I can roam,

As the soul of sea-foam,

On the breast of the billows to-day.

I am free! I am free!

It is nothing to me

That the wavelets are tossed by the wind,

For I float o'er the wings

Of all fluttering things,

With the air between me and my kind;

But yet I am cold,

And the rough days of old,

That I spent in the heart of the sea,

By my brothers kept warm,

In the wrath of the storm,

Was happier living for me!

I am free! I am free!

Who weepeth for me

In the air of the ocean confined?

The rocks are before,

And the pitiless shore,

And the cold, and the storm-clouds behind.

With freedom I've found

That my dwelling is bound,

And far as the furthermost star,

The sun of my dreams,

That were touched by his beams,

Shews faint on his cloud-wreathèd car.

I am free! I am free!

On the silvery sea,

On the breast of the billows upborne ;

I am cold, I am cold,

But the kiss I can hold

That he gave me, the sun-god, at morn ;

And it may be at night,

Or at dawning of light,

Or far in the ages at rest,

He will send down a beam,

Like a beautiful dream,

To carry me up to his breast.

AUTUMN LEAVES.

Wearily, mournfully,
Passion suppressed,
Leaflets uncertainly
Sinking to rest;

Sadly and silently,
One after one,
Doubtingly, dreamingly,
Leaving the sun.

Softly and suddenly
Dropping to die,
Wearily, yearningly,
Asking not why.

Life's burden heavily
  Throbbing with care,
Death had come soothingly,
  Helping to bear.

Passion's intensity,
  Summer had seen,
Colour's diversity
  Fuse into green.

Soft were the shadowings,
  Fraught with full tone,
Colour's mute murmurs
  For freedom outgrown.

Deep dark pulsations
With lights intertwined,
Moving like music
That striveth to find

Passionate utterance,
Freed from control,
Pouring its spirit out
Over the soul.

Western winds wantonly
Whispered of peace,
When in soft slumbering
Struggles should cease,

Murmuring mournfully
Over the plain,
Life and its liberty
Come not again.

Autumn came silently,
Placid and chill,
Leaflets hung listlessly
Sad and so still.

Only in memory
Passions remain,
Fossilled in colouring
Flushes of pain.

Nothing to wait for,

Too tired to sigh,

Lovingly, silently,

Only to die.

FLOWERS.

O my flowers, in the sunlight,
As I sit and see you here,
Filling all my room with fragrance,
All my soul with solemn cheer;

As your beauty steals upon me,
Wave on wave of loveliness,
Waking, in my lonely being,
Voices of the thoughts that bless,

With the old ones comes another,
Born but newly of my bliss;
Were you flowers made so perfect,
Only to be used for this?

Were you glad to leave, this morning,
Each your own life's sunny place,
And be carried where you knew not,
To bestow on me your grace?

Would the sweetness of your presence
Not in something have been less,
Had the pain still lived of leaving,
And you had not loved to bless?

Ah, your fragrance brings the answer,
This the fruit of pain's employ,
Life, delivered in life's bruising,
Now in giving finds its joy.

TWILIGHT.

Beyond the day's perplexing voices,
Within a calmer, larger air,
The faces of all things familiar
Are looking forth divinely fair:

The trees, within the silent meadows,
Seem each some half-remembered dream,
And lovely, as white holy visions,
The meadow flowerets faintly gleam.

Amid the rapt, unconscious stillness,
Are growing all things slowly clear,
And seeing, changes half to feeling,
As hands of memory draw them near.

Then all the beauty that has thrilled us,
When flashing forth at moments rare,
And all the perfect tender fragrance,
Has touched our spirit unaware,

Are gathered back where once we knew them,
And every form before our soul
Uprises in unearthly fulness,
And we at last can feel the whole;

And like a strange, divine emotion,
Becomes our wondrous spirit-seeing,
Until within the forms without us
Is gathered all our lonely being;

And we are feeling with their feeling,

And finding one with their's our soul,

And then we learn creation's meaning,

And hear the secrets of the whole.

AUTUMN.

The Earth is silent in the golden light,
  Her wistful smile is full of deep content,
As though had come at last, within her sight,
  All that the mystery of life has meant.

After the hungering for light, would fling
  Wild arms of strong beseeching to the Sun,
After the cruel passion of the Spring
  The peaceful stillness of possession won.

Across the sun-lit fields the shadows creep,
  The trees are quiet in the silent heat,
And some dear solemn secret seems to keep
  The brooding air, that makes its dreaming sweet.

And every leaflet that the Sun has fed
  Shines with the golden light within its veins
And Earth is calmly waiting, without dread,
  The coming of the storms and winter rains;

Her face is lifted to the sun-lit skies,
  Full of a deep unfathomable rest;
The calm of sweet possession in her eyes,
  The throbbing of the Sun's life in her breast.

ON THE HEIGHTS.

Above the town, above the sea,
High level lands where winds sweep free,
Beneath the sky's infinity :

At evening, when the western light
Sheds long low rays across the height
The whole land lies in glory dight.

And breathing in that crystal air,
Life has no longer need of prayer,
But silent, feels the answer there.

Why now on Love, for loved ones, call?
The air, that on my cheek doth fall,
Is Love's own breath, that breathes on all:

The beams that make my pathway bright
Are from an Eye that holds in sight
All human ways, to be their light.

And yonder, in that stretch of sky,
I see an arm on which doth lie
The whole sad world, as safe as I:

And throbbing through this air so fine,
My own heart feels a Heart divine,
And knows Its love is more than mine.

FAILURE.

Upon the cliffs of Life, 'neath muttering skies,
Grown grave with meaning for the darkening land,
Girt round with roarings from the wave-washed strand
Of circumstance below—with straining eyes,
And arms stretched-out, and wrestling hands that rise
In agony of prayer,—all day we stand,
Watching a frail-built Purpose, that our hand
Launched tremblingly at morn, with tears, and sighs,
And freighted full with Hope :—a little space,
Comes up the blinding mist, and wraps us round
With cold, damp arms, and, covering up our face,
So lays us, sobbed asleep, upon the ground;
While waves waft on our Purpose to its place,
And failure means lost hopes by others found.

FULFILMENT.

It was the clear strong voice of Spring I heard,
Across the melting snows, one winter's day,
And my heart leapt within me, nor could say
Of all the wondrous meaning, any word,
But set the whole to music, like a bird
That sings its heart out to the golden ray,
That chanced at morning first to pass its way,
Not knowing what the thing was that it dared.
But God knew! Neither counted it too bold
That I, His creature here, should crave the sun,
And think its coming meant alone for me;
For gives He not to each what each can hold,
And in His own time filleth every one?
So unto me, my Joy, He giveth thee.

PAIN.

I had to pass the house of Pain, and dread
Lay cold and heavy on me, men his name
Spake tremblingly, the house had evil fame.
I saw the pillared gloom, my pathway led
Straight by the door, whence he would come, they said;
And suddenly, while thinking of the same,
I saw the door move open, and he came!
Approaching me with soft, slow, solemn tread,
And face where Heaven lay sleeping—very still.
I felt on me his cold hands' icy rule,
And eyes, where Love, from earthly wounds made whole,
Dwelt after Life, becalmed my trembling will;
Then on me fell a tear, and, deathly cool,
Living baptismal waters on my soul.

LIVING.

Far underground its root-growth spreads the tree,
Suspected not by those who tread the plain,
Nor yet to any lives affording gain:
But upward, from its secret home, we see
Great asking arms to heaven sent pleadingly
For life-light from the sun, and all the pain
Of living, in a strong, rich, glowing strain
Of colour spreading:—till the land and we,
Grown weak and weary with the long day's heat,
Find rest beneath the shadow it has made.
We suffer, and our failures call defeat,
When sorrow is the price our souls have paid,
For power to give to all a rest-place sweet,
Beneath our own pain's sympathetic shade.

A DOUBT.

How can we bear such joy, dear, you and I!—
  Our lives so satiate with the golden days,
  No longer they remember e'en to praise,
Nor mark the passing hours how swift they fly,
Nor where the World is, that was once so nigh,
  But now far off, beyond the sunny haze,
  Curtaining our hearts, within a wildering maze,
Of joy of which it might be good to die—
Dear, if the world should miss us!—Let us go,
  Give back our gift of joy it may not share,
    And take to us instead its gift of pain:
So spake I; but my Love, he answered, "No;
  But press we to joy's heart, we'll find God there,
    And with Him surely all the World again."

"UNTO DEATH."

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Who knoweth what it means, this "unto death,"
To us who live by dying, day by day,
And on the altar of our dead selves lay
The quivering sacrifice, with human breath?

Who is to tell where restlessness grows rest,
And incompletion reaches the complete,
Or where the structures of our lives shall meet
The crowning point of all, which is their best?

Surely its fullest life life's crown must be,
And yet the words are "faithful unto death,"
He said it, and we know not what He saith,
And very far the end is now to see.

To put the crown on were so easy now;
To stretch and choose from what is here in sight
Some good to be our best, our soul's delight,
And wear as life's completion, on life's brow:

"Be faithful unto death;"—no more command,
Himself He undertakes then all the rest:
How, of the life He gives, know *we* the best?
Or height of need for crowning, waits His hand?

THE CONSOLER.

Many tones, one only echo,
Many wants, but one in name,
Heights of Earth to vaults of Heaven,
Ever sending, send the same:

What the meaning? Death may know it
Many secrets he doth keep,
For in dreams men tell their troubles,
And the dead may dream in sleep.

But from Life it still is hidden,
And her mother-heart is wild,
As she helpless draws her garments
Close around each crying child.

In her weariness and weakness,
With her children Life doth weep;
Death is wiser, Death is silent,
Only sends each child to sleep.

Such a cool refreshing shadow
Shielding every weary thing!
Such a tender hand, and steadfast,
Laid on every fluttering wing!

Truest love to fevered spirits,
With thy silence, after strife,
With thy touch of icy fingers
On the throbbing pulse of life.

Dark against the rosy dawning,

Shading still our waking sight,

We at last shall catch thy shadow

Fainting into arms of Light.

*A HERO'S REST.**

Hang not rich textures round about his bed,
Leave him with only rest, for he was poor;
Fold not his hands in praying, for be sure
The long prayer of his life has all been said;
You must not put even flowers about his head,
For he without them, living, did endure,
Else for some other men there had been fewer,
And now they must not mock him being dead.
Only unclose the shutters, let the sun
Shine full upon him, for he loved the light,
And need be no more severed from his friends.
What if he seemed to fail, where others won?
He missed the World's mark, with a clearer sight
Aiming beyond it, to diviner ends.

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"AS A LITTLE CHILD."

What is it, Baby, you are seeing,
With those contented wistful eyes?
Your little spirit thus out-peering
Upon the world that round you lies?

You have the air of a diviner,
As though of all you understood
Completely everything, and knew it
To be nothing else but good.

Is that what makes you look so happy,
Mysterious, silent little seer?
Are you divinely taught, and wiser
Than we who look on life with fear?

Ah, will you lose that power of vision,
And will forgetting come with years?
Will your joy, too, be slowly setting
Behind a rising mist of tears?

And will you backward look, in sadness,
Upon your childhood's dream afar,
And shivering, as you smile in triumph,
Say now you see things as they are?

What once you knew by heavenly instinct
Must now you surelier learn by pain?
Ah, then in Age's solemn out-look
Will smile the happy child again.

"GO FORWARD."

EXODUS XIV. 15.

The waters were before, the foe behind,
And with me all the weariness again
I thought I left within the House of Pain:
The roaring of the waves upon the wind
Came to me thró' the cloud that kept me blind;
And turning back to where my path had lain,
And crying the deliverance had been vain,
"Go Forward," was all answer I could find.
It seemed so cruel! But the cloud came round
And shut from me the Past, and turned my face
Back to the roaring waters, veiled no more.
And entering in the darkness, lo, I found
The wind that hurt me so had made a place
Straight for my footsteps to the further shore.

POEMS BY ELSIE HIGGINS.

THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

(After Sir Noel Paton.)

Just lifted from the fire of the sand,
  Freed from the cruel fetter of the thorn,
  With shuddering limbs, and fleece defiled and torn,
Uptaken by a strong and tender Hand.
For there has come into this lonely land
  One with a God-like face—much sorrow-worn;
  For this lost thing, which but to life was born
To know His Love's irrefragable band.

And still beneath the thorns His kinghood wears,
His eyes are sadder than the eyes of men,
Nor does He smile upon this treasure-trove.
Is it that other wanderings He fears?
Lost lamb, found lamb, this pain thou canst not ken,
This pain divine that God has called His love.

ETHICS OF THE DUST.

Is this thy crown? Is this the soul that wins?
God! more than all, Thy mercy makes us quail.
We strive towards noble ends, grow weak and fail,
Say, all is over! then Thy work begins.

Yea, we shall all be changed. In much distress
Of labour, angel hands are tending souls;
Dark is it underground where crystal wholes
Are shaping into certain loveliness.

Poor heart! By self-election, cold, unsunned
Of the great Sun of Love, by what strange ways
Wast thou refined to gather all his rays,
And flash them back a perfect diamond?

INFERNO XV.

Cio che narrate di mio corso scrivo,
E serbolo a chiosar con altro testo
A donna che'l saprà, s'a lei arrivo.

Yet here, even here, remembering Beatrice !
Whose name has reached the utter depths of hell,
Through its unrest and tumult whispering peace,
Eternity knows nothing to dispel.

Or summoning from out the heart of woe
The prisoners of hope, whose hope was gone,
Or breathing courage such as spirits know
Whose battle on no mortal field was won.

O, Prophet of the glorious and fair,

O eyes, that gaze on God eternally,

O life, whose beats are love, lips that declare

For ever praise—ye are the vision, ye

That angels greet the throne of God before,

And men call Beatrice, for evermore.

INFERNO XIII.

Weird is this forest of Humanity,
Threaded with dim, with dim uncertain ways,
Through which in ignorance full many days
We tread, bestowing pain unconsciously.
Our feet stamp into clay the leaves that be
Over the sodden ground, our presence lays
As weight of suffering where a while it stays
In negligence we have not wit to see.
Then comes a moment, when the long despite,
The insult and the injury, the pain,
Culminate in some deed of hurtfulness
That wrings to utterance some dumb fettered sprite,
And startles all the soul to consciousness
Of ill achieved, not soon unwrought again.

BEFORE THE ALTAR.

Give us the strength to glorify Thy Name
Wherever Thou shalt lead us—in the shame
Of our own faults and spite of all the sense
Of sloth that draws us into impotence.

Give us the love that cannot be afraid
To look on any face that Thou hast made,
The love that reads Thy touches everywhere,
And knows no terror that it may not dare.

For strength and love—these are Thy bread and wine,
Patience and sympathy the food divine;
The priceless treasures of Thy spirit-hoard
Which Thou dost share with Thy belovèd, Lord.

DISAPPOINTMENTS.

This little green grave, where the lilies grow,
Do you know what it covers? a sweet Hope cl
A babe whose brightness I cannot show,
Whose eyes were of azure undefiled.

Whose wings were golden, whose face was bliss.
We said: He will fly to the sun one day:—
The hour draws nigh when our babe we miss,
We did not think of another way.

We did not know that the child could die!
How should such beauty be laid below?
But he drooped, he fell,—we know not why,
And out of his grave the lilies grow.

THE NEGLECTED BOOK.

" Thou knowest, Lord, I love Thee very well,
But I would put these books by; I can spell
And write Thy meanings fairly, then no more
I need to turn the pages of this lore,
That I have conned again and yet again!
To walk Thy summer fields I well were fain,
I would be making daisy-chains to-day,
Racing the brooks, joining the songbird's lay,
Or chasing those blue moths that flicker round
The thyme-beds, and the sloping, grassy ground
Where bright, gold flowers stream in pairs, let be
The tasks awhile!" He said not " Nay " to me.

I did not stay to look into His face,
But threw my book aside, and lost the place.

And fair enough it was that summer morn
Among the flowers and bees and odours borne
By gentlest winds; and all the sky was blue;
Bluer the sea; athwart them both, birds flew,
Sea-birds with wide-stretched wings of snowy hue.
Yet pain was there, and much I had not guessed;
Amidst the peace, I lighted on unrest;
Strange sorrows that I might not understand
Followed the brightest creatures of God's hand;
Terror I saw that made myself afraid,
And things left desolate I could not aid.

Lost lambs that bleated so, my heart grew sore,
And yet I could not bring them home once more;
Soft, hairy things were crushed, moths bruised or snared,
I to their rescue came all unprepared;
The shining birds dropped wounded in the sea,
I saw them die, but sorrowed helplessly;
A youngling fallen from the mother-nest
I lifted; it, too, died upon my breast.

Grieved, from the meadow ways I turned my feet,
To scan the life that thronged the city street.
Yet sadder were the wild, impatient eyes,
Revealing straits of human agonies
I never dreamed;—the utter loneliness
Of those that found no God in their distress,

How could I help? Despairing cries to still,
Stiff misery to ease, was all my will,
Always my failure. Bitter sobs I heard,
I spoke to soothe, but none would take my word.
Tears fell o'er buried hopes long made forlorn,
I could not tell of Resurrection-morn.
Some timid souls, I sought to help in vain,
Shrank at my touch, and moaned with freshened pain.
Wrong, too, was done, I could in nowise right,
The weak were trodden under in my sight;
Unhelped, did any look at all to me,
They found no comfort nor sweet charity.

Yet ministers there were. I knew the look
Of one who once had shared my lesson-book.

I left her with the Master on the day
I threw my task aside and went to play.
Long was she following, for until He bade,
She would not leave His feet; until he made
Her ready, would not go; until He said,
"Lo! I am with you always to the end,
Henceforth the Lord Himself doth call you friend."

Fair was she, for a silent, holy light
Was on her brow. Her eyes, not over-bright,
Were like the Lord's. I think she wept at night,
When, not unbidden, for His heart to share,
She brought all her perplexity and care.
Then in the day she smiled so helpfully,
Woe sought the face that aye was good to see.

Her tender hand was strong to soothe all pain,
No sufferer looked to her for help in vain.

Yet, ever seemed her words of comfort learned
From the old lesson-book that I had spurned.
So I bethought me, I will seek once more
My former place, if haply in that lore
I wearied of I too may find the balm
She has for suffering, and her gracious calm.

Bewildered and alone, because bereft
Of guiding Hand or Voice from Him I left,
Long was my search, before I found the book
I cast aside; and now with pain I look,

To find the lesson lost. The day draws on,

I scarcely see to read. The ease is gone

With which I turned the pages. I miss more

That Finger set in the one place before,

Marking the page I always fretted o'er,

And would not learn. But most of all I miss

The Face, in which I should have found all bliss.

If I may learn, at last, thus painfully,

I hardly know—the night is very nigh!

ENTBEHREN SOLLST DU: SOLLST ENTBEHREN!

Go thou thy ways, the work of life is thine,
The labour and the suffering divine:—
Not aureole about thy head to shine.

Go thou thy ways, the love of souls to learn,
With all its passion, all its patience burn,
Without the longing for a like return.

Bring all thy heart to bear the Master's will,
What if He break it? it may thus fulfil
Its destined part for the world-sorrow still.

What if, when hurrying with busy feet,
Some rose-clad angel kiss thee in the street!
Be thou aware of God, give praises meet,

But do not tarry further bliss to crave,
Thy portion is to give and not to have,
A soul is thine to lose and not to save.

If ever kneeling in some lowly stead
Unwaited, fall to thee uncomforted
Some apostolic blessing on thy head,

Arise! arise! it is the Lord that sends
Thee, even thee, to toil amid His friends,
But only where He bids and to His ends.

What if beside an open grave one day
The very spirit of the dawn should say
"Behold, the risen Lord is on his way!"

Abide thou in thy garden. Thou shalt meet
Himself in season: as unknown shalt greet,
And recognising, fall to kiss His feet.

POEMS BY BERTHA SYNGE.

THE ANSWER.

—And the answer was: "Wait."

And in my despair I cried, "I! Must I wait then still
longer?

I—young and ambitious and strong,—I never was
stronger,—

I—longing for work—yearning too in this world for a
place,

Howe'er small, there to work for Thee, Lord, e'en short
though the space.

For how can I show Thee my love?—How my Master
serve right,

Doing 'nothings'? Oh, Lord, that must surely be small
in Thy sight!

Reserve force, untouched and abundant—who stronger than I?

Give me work in Thy vineyard for Thee, and pass me not by."

And in my despair I implored Him for work ere too late.

But the answer was gentle, sweet, firm.—And the answer was "Wait."

SUCCESS.

What do we work for in this busy life?
Is it success alone for which we pray?
Is it success that stirs our earthly strife
And crowns a well-spent day?

Success is pleasant, when the shades of night
Creep gently o'er a day of battles won.
Fortune is hard, when sinks the sunny light,
Though every task be done.

Duties are ours, results are God's alone,
His to be used as He would teach us best.
Success and failure here to Him are one—
Duty leads on to rest.

POEMS BY ALICE GREENWOOD.

"KNOWEST THOU IT?"

We live our ceaseless life of toil below,
With thoughts and eyes bent ever on the ground;
And fondly boast the world to us is bound,
The powers of nature ruled by us who know.
Then is there nought but man? What hopeless woe,
If grovelling man were lord of all around,
If all the threads of life round him were wound,
And nature as his outer husk should grow.
But nature has her message yet to say,
Her mighty sequence marches to its close;
The winds and waves roll on their heaven-taught way,
And sunsets blaze in undisturbed repose;
That men may strive their nobler soul to find,
And know there is a higher than mankind.

"*THEY SAY.*"

"They say:—quhat say they? Lat them say."—*Scotch Motto.*

Ay, let them say; they are but fools
Opinion rules.
What should their words import to thee?
Thy ways are free.

They give like gods their "yea" and "nay,"
But let them say;
Be thou, so that thine eyes be clear,
Above a sneer.

Let not words rankle in thine heart,
And bring a smart,

When thou hast gained that thou hast sought
They'll matter nought.

Only keep steadfast to thine aim,
Nor dream of shame,
If worth the wending be thy way,
Then—let them say.

IN TEWKESBURY ABBEY.

The sun slow drawing to the golden west,
Flashed full upon the grey old Abbey pile,
And kissed the lofty pillars down the asile,
With glints from windows, where in glowing vest,
Stood many a holy saint and martyr blest.
Bright lights like blessings touched the calm aisle;
Heaven's sunlight scattered by some angel's smile;
Earth's lowly temple in God's glory drest.

I knew a fair soul like that hallowed place,
Touched with a radiance of the distant skies;
Heaven's beauty shone upon her quiet face,
Lit by the smile of those ethereal eyes;
So from above her spirit drew its might,
Filled with the glory of the Saviour's Light.

HOPE.

Hope once wore a golden crown;
Now despair has torn it down,
And her robe of heaven-like blue
Changes to a darker hue;
Care-dimmed mortals sneering say—
"Hope has but a short-lived day,
"Toils and woes about us throng,
"Never named in Hope's gay song;
"Only children as they pass
"Stop to look in Hope's fair glass."
Men who fain would walk by sight
Cannot bear Hope's golden light,
Will not see the distance clear
When the storm-clouds come so near.
Yet she one day queen shall stand,
Faith and love on either hand.

POEMS BY MRS. JAMES OWEN.

ST. GOVAN'S.

An ever-moaning sea; a cold grey shore;
Wild cliffs, wave-beaten into rugged form;
Dim caves, through which the seething waters roar,
And bleak rocks washed by every wintry storm.
All desolate, as if they might not share
Mercy from God, or love from mortal men,
Sea-maddened winds cry ever fiercely there,
And sea-birds' voices answer back again.
Yet here,—midway upon the cliff's rough face
A ruined chapel stands above the sea,
As though one man had sought the saddest place
Through all Thy world, O God! to worship Thee:
And I am taught, Life holds no dreariness
Which Thy loved presence cannot change—or bless.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.

WRITTEN ON RECOVERING FROM DANGEROUS ILLNESS.

I.

Like some young child, who, wand'ring from his home
With weary footsteps, can no longer roam,
But lying down within the quiet fields
Drops from his hands the flowers they hold, and yields
His tired limbs to peaceful sleep awhile,
Saying—as o'er his face there breaks a smile,
"I am at home—my mother sings to me"—
Then wakes to hear a song-bird on the tree,
And find his home still very far away.
I, who was weary with life-wanderings, lay

Sleeping and dreaming like a tired child,
And soothed by music from across the wild,
The echo of the angels' song on high,
The "Gloria in Excelsis" of the sky.

II.

Oh, far sweet music! It was hard to wake
And find you but a dream, again to take
Through chill and darkness of the silent night
The road which lead across the hills to light;
And hard it was to hear you fade away,
And know the Heaven-sent minstrels would not stay
To cheer me on through all the sounds of strife,
And all the discords of my broken life.
Yet earth has music, though the voice of pain,
The moans of anguish, and the longings vain,

The lonely wail, the orphans' bitter cry,
Rise in confusion to the quiet sky;
Above them all there comes the forest breeze,
There comes the cadence of the rolling seas.
There comes the voice of men whose ears have caught
And mingled in their harmonies some thought
Of far-off music. Blending with the cries
Of human grief and suffering, still shall rise,
Softening the tumult of our grief and mirth,
The "Gloria in Excelsis" of the earth.

III.

And, soul, is there no music for thine ear?
Stoop down and listen quietly to hear
The melody of life. Can no loved voice
In all earth's brotherhood bid thee rejoice?

Is there no strain of triumph in the fight?

Is there no strong voice pleading for the right?

If all of these can bring one joyous thrill,

Then thou art hearing heavenly music still.

Let thy voice add its notes! Hast thou no word

Of kindly comfort? Hast thou ever heard

The poor and weary pray to God to bless

The voice that speaks to them in tenderness?

If thou hast any hope or help to give,

Rejoice to give it—and be glad to live!

For in each low-toned blessing there will be

A note of Heaven's music breathed for thee,

The song which echoes far beyond the strife—

The "Gloria in Excelsis" of thy life.

ASCENDING.

" ' Who shall ascend ? ' We vainly look around
" In hope to see men scale the mist-wrapt height.
" With dim eyes, fixed upon the lowland ground
" They journey through the doubtful shades of night
" Clouds hide the summit where the Master went,
" Clouds hide the end to which we feebly press,
" And, looming through the soul's discouragement,
" We see but shadows of our worthlessness.

" ' Who shall ascend ? ' At best we seem to grope
" Through endless labyrinths of thought and pain,
" And unbelief has dug a grave for hope,
And whispers that our tears for her are vain.

" We cry to one another through the gloom,
" And stretch vain hands to find a kindred hand;
" Death seems no more a summons, but a doom
" Which waits us in a terror-shrouded land.

" 'Who shall ascend?'—While all around we see
" The burning wrongs and sorrows of the earth?
" We cannot set our burdened brothers free
" To rise to God through human sin and dearth!
" 'Who shall ascend?' our love cries restlessly,
" For others' need are sorer than our own;
" We can but linger by their sides and die;
" 'Twere worse than hell to rise to heaven alone.

" 'Who shall ascend?'—We pace with weary feet
" Our life-long path of petty toil and care:
" A path that still leads on, where most paths meet,
" And yet we know not whence it leads, nor where!"

My wail rang out upon the midnight sky,
And short and quick I drew my labouring breath.
All things seem harder when we come to die:
Perchance this struggling weariness means death?

* * * *

Was it a dream, that in the throbbing east
One primrose rift had rent the storm-dark blue,
And grew to glory as the throbs increased,
Till daylight at the golden door broke through!
And I was toiling up a sun-lit hill,
Where some strong hand had led me in the night?
My steps were guided by some hidden will,
And I was climbing towards a world of light.

Yet O !—more sweet than beauty which I saw,

Through all the years there came the Master's voice.

" And I, if I be lifted up, will draw

" All men to me, and make the world rejoice."

He shall ascend who loves with truest love,

Leaving all paths for that which Christ has trod ;

For he who lifts his brother's soul above

Stands, even now, upon the hill of God.

A SPRING SONG.

With strong new life the gladdened earth is teeming,
The budding trees have waked from winter dreaming,
Death and despair the sun has captive led.
Life everywhere! A joyous life is springing—
Life everywhere! The happy birds are singing—
And men alone are sleeping with the dead.

Men too would joy, if men were truly living;
Men too would praise the Giver for His giving;
Not only fill the air with plaints of pain;
Nor stand with empty hands amid the gladness,
Nor mar the song of nature with their sadness,
Nor walk alone, disquieted in vain.

O ! perfect world of love, so rich in beauty !

O ! perfect world of law, so glad in duty !

Content to pass to higher life through death !

Spring's mystery in man is also hidden,

He too shall rise to newer life when bidden,

He too shall feel the kindling of God's breath.

TRANSLATIONS

By ANNIE JOHNSON-BROWN.

EVENING REST.

(*Kinkel.*)

All its throbbing heart of colour
Life has opened to the spring,
From the West the flush is passing
Like a fame upon the wing.
'Neath its plumes the bird's head nestles,
Every murmur is suppressed,
Led, the weary horse returneth,
All creation is at rest.

Only from afar are sounding
Spreading waters uncontrolled,
Through the vale the stream is flowing,
Silver lines its rippling gold.
On the river ships are floating,
Gently borne upon its breast;
Onward, to the well-known haven,
They are coming to their rest.

High above, in marshalled order,
Birds of passage onward fly,
With a leader skilled to guide them
Through the pathways of the sky,
From the sunny South returning
Homewards with a joyous breast,

Not a single wing will weary,
They are coming to their rest.

Thou, my heart, in evening stillness,
Mov'st like boat and bird along,
For thy mighty will impels thee,
And thy yearning makes thee strong.
With the vessel's silent progress,
Floating on the river's breast,
Or the crane's impulsive passage,
Thou, too, comest to thy rest.

THE MORNING STAR.

(*Knapp.*)

When wrapt in dreamy stillness
I first from sleep awake,
The morning-star in splendour
Upon my sight doth break;
Its gentle eye doth greet me
In mild effulgent rays,
So early comes a blessing!
My God, to Thee be praise!

When I was lost in slumber
Thou did'st not send it then;
A light is now arisen
To banish sleep from men.

Blest he, whom forth from darkness,
The light of life has drawn,
Upon whose mental vision
Eternal day doth dawn!

For life, with tearful gladness
I would most thankful be;
To Thee I breathe my yearning,
And Thou Thy love to me.
Arise on hate and anguish,
And ne'er be very far,
Arise upon my spirit,
Thou bright and morning star.

THE PILGRIM.

(*Schiller.*)

When my life was in its spring-time,
Forth I went new paths to find,
Leaving in my father's mansion
All my youthful joys behind.

All my wordly goods and portion
I in simple faith resigned,
With a pilgrim's staff departing,
And a trustful, childlike mind.

For a mighty hope impelled me,
And I heard a wandering voice,
" Forth," it cried, " the way is open,
Thou hast now no other choice."

Onward, till the golden portals
Thou hast reached, thou still must go,
For the Land that lies within them
Nought of earth or change doth know.

Morning after morning followed,
I could never, never rest,
What I sought for still was hidden,
Ever onward still I pressed.

Mighty mountains lay before me,
Streams across my pathway ran,
Bridges had I oft to fashion,
Deep abysms with roads to span.

Till I came unto a river

Flowing onwards from the West,

Gladly trusting to its current,

Then I cast me on its breast.

Onward to a mighty ocean

I by sportive waves was borne,

Watery wastes lie *still* between me

And the far-off Land of Morn.

Oh, what road shall stretch across them,

Heaven's blue arch it never may

Touch the earth for man to cross it,

And that land lies far away.

POEM BY MRS. VAN GLEHN

(*née* BRADLEY).

THE POTTER'S CLAY.

Once, long ago, on a bygone day,
A potter fashioned a lump of clay;
Common clay of but little worth,
That a man may find in the common earth.
Yet, like a cunning master, he
Fashioned and wrought it skilfully;
Kneaded the patient lump, and made
A shapely cup, with flowers o'erlaid.
Then thrust his work to the cruel flame,
Till out of the yielding mass there came
Strength and beauty. And now the thing
Was fashioned, and fit for the use of a king.

Nought but clay are we sons of earth,
But the Maker knoweth what each is worth ;
And each man's heart, like a potter, He
Mouldeth and fashioneth skilfully.
The heart's dull mass must be tried by pain,
Or the Maker's work would be spent in vain ;
And the fire of sorrow our hearts must wring.
Ere they are fit for the use of the King.